



Minutes for Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

Date: Friday, August 14, 2020

Location: B-106 Conference Room, Murdock Administration Building

Members Present:

Kathy Burnam
Commissioner Chris Constance
Councilmember Jaha Cummings
Keith Farlow
David Haynes
Robin Madden
Mayor Nancy Prafke
Janet Watermeier

Staff Present:

Sean Doherty, Interim Director of Tourism,
Lena Applegate, Admin Services Coordinator
Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager
Julie Pennock, Marketing Assistant
Dan Roe, Tax Collector's Office
Scott Ericson, Fiscal Services
Elie Fischhof, Fiscal Services
Lori Tetreault, Deputy County Attorney
Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator

Members Absent:

Commissioner Bill Truex
Kelly Williamson

Guests:

Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center
Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
Dave Di Maggio, Aqua Marketing & Communications
Katie Varano, Aqua Marketing & Communications
Brittany Chapman, Aqua Marketing & Communications

Call to Order/Roll Call

Commissioner Chris Constance called the Charlotte County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2020 meeting was made by Janet Watermeier. Kathy Burnam seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Approval of TDC Meeting Dates for FY 2021

A motion to approve the TDC meeting dates for FY 2021 was made by Mayor Nancy Prafke. Kathy Burnam seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Citizen Input

Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, provided a handout showing bookings for the 9-month period (October 2019 – June 2020). Finch advised that the event center has implemented a program called Venue Shield which is ASM Global's (the event center's management company) proprietary housekeeping standardization program. Finch reported that the event center has had to cancel or postpone 99 events. About 10% of the events have been able to reschedule but most of the events are annual.

Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA), advised that the FRLA is against the \$15 minimum wage – Amendment 2. Croft advised that the FRLA is doing a lot of grassroots efforts to educate people on the impact of this Amendment if passed.

Kaley Miller, Punta Gorda Airport, advised that the airport is down 38% in passenger traffic as opposed to July 2019. The overall load factor was at 62% in July 2020. Miller also reported that as the airport continues to grow, they are using the CARES Act funds to supplement their operating expenses. Ms. Miller shared the design for the new shuttle bus which utilizes the VCB logo with the PGD logo.

Tourist Development Tax Reports

The tax collector report was presented by Dan Roe. Roe reported on collections for April through June 2020 of \$628,507.62. There are 530 total suspect accounts on file with no inactive suspect accounts in the third quarter. There were also no inactive suspect accounts that are now active. There is a total of 3043 properties compared to the 3115 from the last quarter which is a decrease of 72 properties.

The fiscal report was presented by Scott Ericson. Ericson reported that we are 10 months through the fiscal year with around \$2.1 million of the \$2.8 million budget expended. This is about 75% of the anticipated expenditures. Ericson also reported that the Conversant data platform has been submitted for CARES Act reimbursement. This item is still being reviewed by the consultant.

Mr. Ericson proceeded to report on the COVID Revenue Impact Analysis. He stated that an average of an optimistic and pessimistic outlook month over month was used to develop the model. The actuals have come in much better than the estimated conservative numbers. Taxes for the collection in June and distributed in August were at a positive 26.2% over budget for that month.

Budget Review & Final Approval of FY 2021 Budget

Ericson presented information on the budget which showed actuals for the FY 19 budget, what was budgeted for FY 2020 and FY 2021. He explained that the county is on a two-year budget cycle and that budget was projected flat from FY 2020 and FY 2021. A motion was made by Kathy Burnam to recommend final approval of the FY 2021 budget to the Board of County Commissioners. Mayor Nancy Prafke seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Commissioner Chris Constance will submit the TDC FY 2021 budget approval recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

TDC Seat Vetting

Kathy Burnam's appointment has expired. Lori Tetreault, Deputy County Attorney, advised that there are two applications to consider for this industry seat. The applications have been vetted and considered qualified by Sean Doherty and Lori Tetreault. With Kathy Burnam recusing herself from voting and Kelly Williams as an excused absentee member, a ballot vote was taken by the TDC with five (5) votes for Kathy Burnam and two (2) votes for Kaley Miller. A motion was made by Mayor Nancy Prafke to recommend reappointment of Kathy Burnam for the industry TDC seat. Janet Watermeier seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Commissioner Chris Constance will submit the TDC recommendation of Kathy Burnam to the Board of County Commissioners.

Aqua Marketing & Communications//Recovery Plan & FY 2021 Marketing Plan Presentation

Dave Di Maggio, President/CEO, and team provided a detailed presentation on the current recovery plan. Katie Varano, Account Executive, outlined the current and future advertising plan. She spoke on how flexibility is key, and that digital marketing allows the VCB to do this. The plan is nearly 100% digital which also allows the ability to spend budget dollars wisely and make the most impact.

Director/Staff Reports

Sean Doherty, Interim Director of Tourism, reported on Tourist Development Tax for Charlotte County and how it compares to other neighboring counties, Sarasota County and Lee County. Doherty advised that the month of June showed an increase of 21% which could be the result of pent up demand and/or the three (3) sporting events that were held in the same month. Doherty stated that the month of July is looking very strong and advised that a few of the rescheduled events will be held in August. This will include the Sugar Bert Boxing event and a BMX Gold Cup event.

Doherty also provided a brief report on the new digital platform that is being utilized as part of the recovery campaign and possible continuation of Conversant's services. He also advised that there are co-marketing opportunities being reviewed with one currently in the works with Allegiant.

Council Comments

- Janet Watermeier advised that the Visual Arts Center typically shuts down in August to complete construction and have decided to add a couple more weeks to the closure. Operations will be resuming after Labor Day. The Visual Arts Center will be hosting a virtual open house.
- Kathy Burnam reported that June at Fishermen's Village was a great month and that many of the merchants reported that they were up. However, July is not looking as promising. Burnam also reported that Fishermen's Village has not currently been hosting a lot of events in an effort to be safe and not bring large groups of people together.
- Mayor Nancy Prafke reported that the Punta Gorda council has been on break since early July. The Mayor also reported that a new City Manager will begin on August 24th and working with the current City Manager until his retirement on October 2nd. Mayor Prafke advised the PicklePlex's business plan was based on the ability to host tournaments. However, due to COVID, this has not been possible. As a result, the PicklePlex has started a membership campaign. 122 players have currently signed up of which 81 are from Charlotte County.
- Robin Madden advised that July is going to be better than June rental numbers. She also advised that house sales are up and inventory dramatically decreasing due to these sales.
- Keith Farlow reported that he has been in contact with several merchants and all are reporting that they are holding their own. Farlow also reported that his numbers are mimicking last year's. However, he stated that November could potentially be a game changer if Amendment 2 is passed. If passed, it will put small restaurants out of business.
- Councilmember Jaha Cummings expressed his joy over the positive revenue numbers and that the county as a whole is being proactive.
- David Haynes reported that activity on house sales are up and that inventory is decreasing. Rentals are still up as well. Haynes advised that they are selling houses that are actually part of their rental inventory.
- Commissioner Chris Constance expressed his appreciation to be part of the meeting and his appreciation of the forward movement of the industry.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

Next TDC Meeting

The next TDC meeting is at 9 a.m. Friday, October 9, 2020. The meeting will be held in the B-106 Conference Room, Murdock Administration Building, 18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte.